

Alcorn State University  
Oakland Chapel  
Alcorn ~~Normal~~ vicinity  
Claiborne County  
Mississippi

HABS No. MS-202

HABS  
MISS,  
11-ALCO.V,  
2-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

ADDENDUM  
FOLLO

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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ALCORN STATE UNIVERSITY, OAKLAND CHAPEL

HABS No. MS-202

Location: Alcorn State University Campus,  
~~Lorman~~ vicinity, Claiborne County, Mississippi, 39096  
Alcorn

Present Owner: Alcorn State University, ~~Lorman~~ vicinity Mississippi  
Alcorn

Present Occupants: Alcorn State University, used for chapel and classrooms

Significance: Dating from 1838, Oakland Chapel is a significant example of Greek Revival architecture adapted for academic and religious purposes. Oakland College was the first collegiate institution in the state. The College first granted a degree in 1833. Its successor on the site, Alcorn State University, granted the first degree to a Black citizen of Mississippi in 1882.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1838
2. Architect: Unknown
3. Original and subsequent owners: Oakland College, Alcorn State
4. Original plans and construction: The chapel at Alcorn University was originally constructed of brick laid in common bond on the side and rear elevations and of Flemish bond on the facade. The plan accommodates a large, two-story chapel on the first and second floors, and classrooms on the ground floor and in secondary chambers on the first and second floors. Both the original plan and materials remain well preserved.
5. Alterations and additions: Following damage due to a tornado in 1858, the chapel was reroofed and interior repairs were made, including replastering, painting, replacing the windows under the portico and installing brass rim locks on interior doors. In 1967, the ground floor was extensively remodeled to accommodate classrooms.

B. Historical Context:

Closed during the Civil War, Oakland College was sold in 1871 to the State of Mississippi which established the first landgrant college for Blacks in the nation in 1878 on the campus. The college was named Alcorn A & M College. Hiram R. Revels, the first Black to be elected to the U. S. Senate, was selected as the school's first president.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The chapel is an excellent example of Greek Revival architecture, notable for its huge portico with a pediment and full entablature. The interior contains typical Greek Revival woodwork, some of which is carved.
2. Condition of fabric: Good

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The rectangular, three-story building has a five bay facade and seven bays plus a portico on the side. The overall dimensions are: 112' by 65'.
2. Foundations: The foundation is built of brick, laid in five course common bond.
3. Walls. The walls of the main facade are constructed of brick, laid in Flemish bond. The side and rear elevations are of six course common bond.
4. Structural system, framing: The masonry walls are load bearing.
5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads: The facade is ornamented with a five bay portico of provincial Tuscan columns, full entablature and pediment. The iron steps and ballustrade were removed from Windsor Plantation, the mansion of Smith Coffee Daniell II, which was destroyed by fire in 1890.
6. Chimneys: There are twelve small stove chimneys which are no longer functional.
7. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: The main entrance is framed by pilasters supporting a full entablature. The double leaf, single panel doors are surrounded by seven-pane side lights and a twelve-pane transom above.
  - b. Windows: The windows are double hung, with 12 over 12 glazing.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape: Gabled.
- b. Cornice: The classical cornice of the entablature is carried around the entire building.
- c. Cupola: The square cupola is ornamented with Doric columns set between piers and capped by an entablature of triglyphs and metopes.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: Ground floor: a center hall divides this floor and gives access to eight classrooms. The front two rooms are diminished to accommodate a wider stair hall. At the first and second floors the rectangular stair hall is flanked by two secondary chambers. The chapel occupies the rear two-thirds of these floors.
  2. Stairways: Each of the three staircases is a single flight with winders at the top. The newell of the principal stairs is a tapered octagon with chamfered faces.
  3. Flooring: Tongue and groove, pine.
  4. Walls and ceiling finish: The walls are plaster over the base boards. The ceilings are of plaster.
  5. Openings:
    - a. Doorways and doors: The doors have two narrow panes and the doorframes are typically Greek Revival. Splayed architraves with dog-ears support a full entablature.
  6. Decorative features and trim: A tabernacle is located on the dias at the front of the chapel. It is designed with coupled pilasters, full entablature, pediment and gilt antifixes.
- D. Site: The chapel is located "in an elevated and healthy situation in a moral neighborhood...free from tippling houses and other temptation of vice" (1838).

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Primary and unpublished sources:

History of Oakland College 1830-1871, Melvin Kellogg Bruss.  
Unpublished MA thesis, Louisiana State University, January 1965.

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Mississippi Department of Archives and History, National Register  
File. Claiborne County, Oakland Chapel.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was coordinated by the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Elbert Hilliard, Director. The data was compiled by William Allen, Architectural Historian, October 1974. Edited and transmitted by Marion K. Schlefer, Historic American Buildings Survey, September 1984.

Addendum to:

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